

Chairman Powell,

I am writing in response to the Faith and Family Broadcasting Coalition's (Faith and Family) and the Religious Voices in Broadcasting's (Religious Voices) comments in opposition to a la carte regulation of cable and satellite broadcasts.

As President and General Manager of two religious broadcasting stations in Central Florida, I agree with both the Faith and Family and Religious Voices comments, and would like to reply with a very brief comment of my own.

I operate WTGL TV52 and WLCB TV45 in Orlando, Florida. These stations reach an estimated 1.2 million households throughout Central Florida. and millions who visit here from around the world who stay in our hotels, motels and condos. Over 70 percent of the [WTGL/WLCB-Orlando] market is cable, with the other 30 percent being over the air broadcast and direct satellite. Naturally, that ratio makes me an interested party in the ala carte issue.

As the Faith and Family and Religious Voices comments indicate, religious broadcasting does not command the advertising or subscription dollars that commercial broadcasting does. While this may change, religious broadcasts are not ready to be thrown in with the commercial stations that enjoy nationwide marketing and network affiliations.

One of the most important aspects of television ministry is that we reach men and women at an unpredictable time and place in their lives, when they are ready to hear the Word, or when they need to know that they are not alone. Unexpectedly, a man or woman may "channel surf" and settle upon a religious broadcast at a time of personal despair, or trouble, or at a time when a loved one needs them to be especially strong. It is at these moments that television ministries are at their best. It is at these times when they can inspire, comfort, strengthen, and provide a message of hope and salvation. But if an otherwise secular cable customer is forced to "take or leave" a religious broadcast when they are concerned about other things, they may very well pass on the religious broadcast. Then, when they are in need or despair, there will be no religious broadcast for them to settle upon while channel surfing.

Sometimes a television broadcast is a non-threatening medium for those whose pride would otherwise prevent them from seeking help for addiction or other problems. Just as with the ministry, a moral lesson and a call for strength often falls on deaf ears. But when the prideful are ready to listen, religious broadcasts are there for them.

Simply put, the value of a religious broadcast is evaluated quite differently at different times, and it would be a tragic loss of public service and public and private comfort to truncate that service and create a delivery system that reduced viewer choices throughout their viewing experience. I hope you take the special nature of our broadcasts and those we serve into consideration when you take up the issue of a la carte.

A final thought is in order on the different interests or larger and smaller broadcasters. Without must carry language, both in analog and digital multi-cast, we will find it increasingly difficult to compete with network stations in our markets. We must have must carry protection to preserve our voice in our markets. This is extremely important to us.

Once again, I would like to associate myself with the comments of both the Faith and Family and the Religious Voices, and to join in opposition to Federal a la carte regulations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ken Mikesell
President and General Manager
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